



NORTHERN SPIRIT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The United Church of Canada

Regional Council News

Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Announcements and Information that might be of interest the people of the Northern Spirit Region. If you have news to share or information about an upcoming event, please send it to Kathy Jackson, Administrative Support: kjackson@united-church.ca, or post it to the Community of Faith Events Newsfeed: <https://northernspiritrc.ca/add-your-community-event/>

Family News

We have received news of the death of the Rev. Dr. John (Jack) R. Colclough on May 4, 2020. Jack was ordained in 1950, and served several churches in BC and Alberta before his retirement in 1989. He is remembered for his many years of work in the former ANW Conference Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, and for his service as Alberta Conference President in 1980-81. Please hold Jack's family and friends in prayer.

One Church's Experience with COVID-19

Calgary's Living Spirit United Church is choosing to tell the story of their experience with COVID-19 as a public service. As Rev. Shannon Mang says, "We don't want another organization or faith community to go through what we've been through." We appreciate that the people of Living Spirit have offered their thought-provoking story and their courageous leadership as we all walk this pandemic journey, contemplating next steps. For the full story, please use this link to the Chinook Winds Regional Council E-News: <https://us8.campaign-archive.com/?u=be76b3351358cbe291a86a904&id=524350785f>, and for the CTV news article, please [click here](#). We offer our prayers for the Ministry Personnel and members of Living Spirit United Church, Calgary.

United Church of Canada COVID-19 Updates

Re-Opening Discernment and Practices

In The United Church of Canada, each council makes decisions on reopening for its areas of responsibility. The governing board of each community of faith should consult with its local public health unit, provincial health ministry, and regional council. **The guiding principle is the safety of all who enter the building.** This important [three-part resource](#) on "re-opening" discernment and practices has been prepared by the General Council. This link will continue to access new information as it is updated, so please check back regularly. Thank you to the many people involved in thinking carefully about the many practical, spiritual, and ethical complexities of these decisions.

Emergency Finances Information: Web Resources

[Your homepage for all COVID related finances is here.](#)

The national church has now shared a new summary of [United Church-related emergency financial options](#). This includes a [bridging loan application form](#) that will be approved through your Regional Council. This program is made possible by a \$3 million grant from [The United Church of Canada Foundation](#).

Please review all information carefully, as the order in which you proceed is important.

The continuing [weekly financial webinars at United in Learning](#) are also an important support, but please be aware that information in the older recorded webinars has likely changed.

May 13 Webinar: Congregational Finances during the Pandemic

This continuing Wednesday series keeps us up to date on financial aid that continues to evolve rapidly. Times: 4:00 PM in BC; and 5:00 PM in AB, NWT and SK. Access is through [United in Learning](#) or the [national church's YouTube channel](#).

May 14 Webinar: Congregational Programming during the Pandemic

During the pandemic, United-in-Learning is offering a weekly series for ministers and church leaders, with just-in-time skills and reflections intended to help us all respond to the unusual situation we find ourselves in. If you have specific requests or suggestions for future topics, please [CLICK HERE](#) to email us! [Here's full information on this weekly series](#).

COVID and Stewardship: Supporting Global Partners

People of the United Church have asked how they can support our church as we reach out to partners and the vulnerable communities they work with during this time of pandemic. The United Church is now accepting donations to help support Mission & Service partners in the global South as they work to meet the needs of these communities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more and support this appeal, visit [COVID-19: Global Response](#).

Many of the communities that Mission & Service partners work with are already living with hunger, lack of access to water, crowded living conditions, and limited health care. COVID-19 has made these heartbreaking realities worse. The United Church is [working faithfully with partners](#) to address immediate needs for food and supplies to help keep communities safe during the pandemic.

Guidance for Private Sponsors of Refugees during COVID-19

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) assists sponsors with understanding how cases in process are affected by COVID-19 and, for refugees already in Canada, how sponsors can continue to fulfill their sponsorship role while also addressing the unique needs of sponsored refugees during this difficult time. Updated information on how COVID-19 is affecting refugee sponsorship to Canada and other immigration programs can be found on IRCC's website at the links below:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19.html>

Pandemics and Social Change

Wednesday, May 13, 7-9 p, (AB time): Chadress Kabagenyi, a Ugandan nurse living in Calgary, and who has dealt with AIDS and Ebola in Uganda, will talk about social change and finding a new normal. This is part of a weekly "Ethical Dilemmas" series exploring faith and justice, running through to May 27. For the link please contact Tony Snow, tony.snow@hillhurstunited.com.

Regional Council COVID-19 Updates

Letter from Shannon McCarthy, Executive Minister

Shannon has written a letter to the Regional Council with her thoughts and general recommendations about re-opening of churches. Please read [the letter](#), and share it widely in your community of faith and other circles.

Ongoing Regional Ministry Personnel Check-In and Support Gatherings

The Regional Council will continue with Tuesday afternoon Ministry Personnel check-ins that are Region-specific. The connection details have been emailed to active Ministry Personnel. Please contact the Regional Council Office for further information.

Lay Leadership Information and Check-In

Wednesday, May 13, **Questions and Answers for Re-Opening Churches**. Please share this information with your Board Chairperson, Ministry Personnel, or anyone who wants to be involved in the conversation. Times: 5:30 pm in BC; and 6:30 pm in AB, NWT and SK.

Meeting Link: <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/92436034028>.

Toll-free Telephone Access: 1-855-703-8985 Meeting ID: 924 3603 4028.

(Please do not post this link on social media or your website, but please do share it by email.)

For the rest of May and in June we will gather as needed, and as the situation continues to evolve.

Watch this newsletter and Facebook for invitations! Have an idea for a gathering topic? We need to hear from you. Please email the Regional Council Office at northernspirit@united-church.ca.

Emergency Financial Support for Communities of Faith

Please contact the Regional Council Office for information about two funding programs that have been established by the Regional Council.

Emergency Relief Fund: funds available to assist with disaster recovery and extraordinary costs related to the current emergency. (Not intended for major capital or payroll expenditures).

Interest Free Loans: (a) up to \$1,500 per Community of Faith, intended to assist with bridging payroll expenses until federal government funding becomes available. (b) up to \$10,000 per Community of Faith to assist with payroll and community engagement costs until the end of 2020.

In Other News ...

Sharing Your Local Events on the Regional Council Web Site

Reminder: you can promote your local events through our website. Regular worship should be registered with the national church's map and listings, but everything from bible study to a workshop to drive-up pie or bannock fundraisers can be shared on our Communities of Faith events calendar through our [community events form](#). The event must be a United Church event open to the public. Give it a try!

Series on Racism and the Hope for Real Reconciliation

Gratitude is offered to the people of St. Paul (please note this correction, with our apology for last week's error), Saddle Lake Cree Nation, and others who took the difficult step of publicly naming racism in their community. Many if not most Canadian communities have the same struggle with racism; only by naming it can we start to move beyond it. This multi-part article series explores different local perspectives on racism and its impacts on Indigenous people and communities, and looks closely at local efforts to address it. [Access it here](#).

Worship Themes and Resources for May and June

Upcoming special Sundays, and worship resources for them, are noted [here in this handy summary](#).

Many of our special Sundays highlight diverse communities and special ministries. May is Asian Heritage Month, celebrating the roots and cultures of many in our church and across Canada who hold Asian heritage. In a [personal reflection](#), the Rev Dr. Alan Lai invites us in the intercultural challenges of Asian Heritage Month.

In June both Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities are a focus for the United Church. June 7 is [Pride Sunday](#) (as well as Church Union Sunday), and June 21 is National Indigenous Day and the Indigenous Day of Prayer. Find [new resources for this important day here](#).

National Webinar: Becoming a Trans Ally/Accomplice

Date and Time: Monday, May 25, 2020: 4:00 in BC; 5:00 pm in AB, NWT and SK.

Trans and non-binary people are members of the United Church: they are our ministers, our lay leaders, our children and youth, our neighbours, our colleagues, our family and friends. But despite church policies and federal and provincial laws that affirm transgender people, they still face disproportionately high rates of discrimination. If you are interested in learning how to be a trans ally/accomplice then this webinar is for you! If you're a Regional Council delegate, you will be voting later this year on a Remit related to inclusive, non-binary language in the Basis of Union, and this webinar will help you hear why that change is important. Learn what it means to stand in solidarity with trans and non-binary people, to speak out consistently, to address systemic transphobia, and to actively participate in witnessing to and advocating with trans and non-binary people for their rights and human dignity.

[Find out more and register here](#).

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